

**ISS Risk Special Report:
Growth of Militancy and ISIS in Bangladesh
June, 2016**



Intelligent Security Solutions Holding Limited
Room 501, 5/f, Chung Ying Building
20 Connaught Road West
Sheung Wan
Hong Kong Phone: +852 5619 7008
China Phone: +861 3910 9907 39
www.issrisk.com



Executive Summary

As Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS) continues to make violent forays into countries across Europe, North Africa, Central Asia and Southeast Asia, the pertinent question becomes what is their strategy for South Asia? Afghanistan and Pakistan, which have for long been recognised as the epicentres of global terrorism and conflict, clearly feature in this ISIS plan. Bangladesh, on the other hand, has been given little to no real attention regarding its now potentially pivotal importance as a bridge between ISIS' South and Southeast Asian aspirations. Whether these ambitions are realised through a truly regional sized Caliphate, 'a Khurasan State,' or through the construction of an 'archipelago of mini Caliphates' across the region, Bangladesh's geographical location and the religious demographics of its population by definition merit its close examination.

This report investigates and provides insight into all of the following questions: What role will the militants in Bangladesh potentially play in ISIS' plans? What is the situation regarding domestic militancy now? Who are indeed the main players in this largely traditional society, one which has repeatedly struggled and at times failed to retain its founding ideology of constitutional secularism? What are the dynamics of the intra-religious tensions in its 86% Muslim population?

Generally, we will examine the broader jihadist and militant landscape in the country and then move into an analysis of how ISIS is capitalising on the lack of government recognition of the existence of a growing local problem. Our analysis reveals that the introduction of ISIS into Bangladesh has enhanced the operational capabilities of local extremist groups and fostered a more sophisticated jihadist network. Additionally, the anointment of an Emir in Bangladesh indicates that the group has significant plans for the country, as – methodically speaking – such anointment precludes the designation of a local province as part of the Caliphate. Should the government continue turning a blind eye, these intentions in conjunction with the growing power of local extremist groups will be detrimental for the political system, national economy, and social welfare of the country. However, this threatening prospect would not only affect Bangladesh. Unfortunately, the reality is that the strengthening of Jihadism domestically will undoubtedly abet the growth of extremist counterparts across the entire region. Consequently, if the Bangladeshi government does not take action against internal terrorism now, the entire region will suffer as instability ripples well beyond its country's borders.